

Developments

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CUBA:

Preparing for the Flotilla [REDACTED]

The government is taking a cautious approach to today's flotilla in an effort to offset some of the damage done by its shootdown of two civilian aircraft last Saturday.

- Foreign Minister Robaina yesterday publicly said Cuba will act with "utmost restraint to avoid any new incidents." Havana, he said, wants to avoid "an escalation promoted by the Cuban-American right wing," *continuing the theme that Cuban-US citizens, not the US Government, are chiefly responsible for increased tension.*
 - A Foreign Ministry official announced on Thursday that Havana would view the flotilla's presence below the 24th parallel—Cuba's Air Defense Identification Zone—as a "provocation" but would take no action if it remained in international waters and airspace. *Havana appears to be preparing to claim credit for restraint even if the flotilla never enters Cuban territory.*
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Special Analysis

CUBA:

Behind the Shootdown

Havana

ordered the destruction of the two US-registered civilian aircraft last Saturday.

— Last July, President Castro described the group's first leaflet drop over Havana as an "extraordinary provocation," adding that Cuba's patience could well be exhausted. The Foreign Ministry issued a warning that, if additional territorial violations occurred, intruding boats could be sunk and aircraft shot down.

— Another leaflet drop over Havana in mid-January

Weighing the Risks

— At home, the economy is beginning to recover from an economic contraction of 35 percent following the cutoff of Soviet aid in 1989.

continued

~~Top Secret~~

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[REDACTED] As it demonstrated last week in cracking down on the umbrella group Cuban Council, the government has kept dissidents marginalized and off-balance through infiltration, harassment, and imprisonment. [REDACTED]

The Castro government doubtless anticipated a negative US reaction to the shootdown, but it seems to have been taken aback by the vehemence of Washington's response and the widespread international condemnation of Cuba's behavior.

- [REDACTED]
- National Assembly President Alarcon and Foreign Minister Robaina were uncharacteristically unprepared while presenting their cases— [REDACTED]

Limiting the Damage [REDACTED]

At this point, Havana is trying to forestall any international sanctions and to do what it can to put the incident behind it.

- By painting Brothers to the Rescue as a rogue organization, the Castro government is trying to improve its international image and to put pressure on the US to impose stronger restraints on the group's activities.
- [REDACTED]